

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 L-03 CAB-02 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8927

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 00832

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, ECON

SUBJECT: SABENA - AIR ZAIRE NEGOTIATIONS

REF: (A) STATE 17555, (B) KINSHASA 573

1. WE SPOKE BRIEFLY WITH PAN AM VP FOR AIRLINE SERVICES
ERSKINE RICE, WHO WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT AIR ZAIRE CONTRACT
CANCELLATION WOULD BE TURNED AROUND. HE THINKS THE STORY
THAT SABENA WAS NEGOTIATING TO REPLACE PANAM WAS BASED ON
A MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE SABENA GROUP RECENTLY IN
KINSHASA. I APPEARS RATHER THAT AIR ZAIRE WOULD LIKE TO
TAKE OVER ITS OWN OPERATIONS, BUT RICE THINKS THEY ARE NOT
YET READY AND THAT HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH THEM WILL BRING
THEM TO AN APPRECIATION OF THAT FACT. HE IS TRAVELING
TO MUNICH TODAY WHERE HE HOPES TO MEET BISENGIMANA AND
WRAP THIS MATTER UP. PROBABLY HE WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH
PANAM NEW YORK FROM MUNICH. (FOR MUNICH: WE TOLD RICE
EH SHOULD NOT HESITATE TO CALL ON CONGEN FOR ASSISTANCE
IF NECESSARY.)

2. FOREIGN MINISTRYS ZAIRE DESK OFFICER (JAENEN)
TOLD US JANUARY 26 THAT TO BEST OF HIS KNOWLEDGE THERE
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WAS NO MOVE BY SABENA TO TAKE OVER PAN AM CONTRACT AND
THAT, IN ANY EVENT, SUBJECT DID NOT ARISE DURING
BRUSSELS VISIT OF PRESIDENT MOBUTU (SEPTEL). JAENEN
WONDERED WHETHER WE WERE MIXING UP QUESTION OF RENEWAL
OF PAN AM CONTRACT WITH CONTINUING BELGIAN-ZAIRIAN TALKS
ABOUT COOPERATION IN THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR. HE
SAID THAT LAST JUNE BELGIUM TOLD GOZ IT WAS WILLING TO

HELP AIR ZAIRE WITH PART OF ITS PLAN TO IMPROVE THE
AIRLINE AND ASKED ZAIRE TO SUBMIT TO BELGIANS ITS
IMPROVEMENT PLANS SO THAT BELGIANS COULD DETERMINE IN WHAT
AREA THEY COULD HELP. SUBSEQUENTLY, ACCORDING TO JAENEN,
AIR ZAIRE SENT UP FOR STUDY A BF 200 MILLION GENERAL
IMPROVEMENT PACKAGE. BELGIAN GOVERNMENT AND SABENA
HAVE FINISHED REVIEWING PACKAGE AND BELGIANS INFORMED
FOREIGN MINISTER NGUZA DURING BELGO-ZAIRE JOINT COMMISSION
SESSION JANUARY 17 (HELD SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH MOBUTU VISIT)
THAT BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD FINANCE A BF 30 MILLION
TRAINING PROGRAM FOR AIR ZAIRE TO BE PERFORMED BY
SABENA. JAENEN SAID A SABENA TEAM HAD BEEN IN KINSHASA
ON THIS TRAINING MATTER EARLY THIS YEAR; ANOTHER SABENA
MISSION WOULD BE GOING BACK "SOON". RENNER

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